

**THE HON JUSTICE DEREK PRICE AM**  
**CHIEF JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES**  
**FAREWELL CEREMONY FOR JUDGE CHRISTOPHER ARMITAGE**  
**UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT AS A JUDGE OF THE**  
**DISTRICT COURT**

**6 MAY 2016**

1. I extend a very warm welcome to all present this morning. I am delighted that the Honourable Reginald Blanch AO, our former Chief Judge of this court, is here as are former judges of the court, the Honourable Megan Latham and Di Truss. I am grateful for the attendance of Larry King QC who will speak on behalf of the New South Wales Bar and Pauline Wright, Senior Vice President of the Law Society of New South Wales, who will speak on behalf of the Law Society.
2. I have convened this special sitting of the court to farewell Judge Christopher Armitage and to recognise his valuable contribution to the administration of justice in New South Wales.
3. Judge Armitage, your judicial career has spanned almost 22 years. You were sworn in as a Judge of the Compensation Court of New South Wales on 30 September 1994, you were a Judge of the Dust Diseases Tribunal from 1996 to December 2003 and became a Judge of this court in 2004.
4. The diversity of your judicial experience might be gleaned from cases over which you presided. For this purpose, I mention two:
5. In 1995, whilst sitting in the Compensation Court, your task was to determine an application by an employee (the applicant) against his employer, the Casino Municipal Council. The applicant had sustained an injury in a running race whilst at a union picnic day. The issue was whether the applicant had suffered an injury arising out of or in the course of his employment.
6. In your judgment, you determined that regard must be had to current views of what came within the scope of employment and included an inquiry as to whether the employer had induced or encouraged the applicant to spend his time at the union picnic. You said that the indicia favouring the proposition that the Council had encouraged its employee to attend the picnic, included the Council's paymaster (with the employees' consent) making deductions from the payroll for the cost of the picnic tickets and placing the tickets in the employees' pay envelopes. Furthermore, the tug-of-war rope used at the picnic came from the Council's store. You decided that the balance of probabilities favoured the inference being drawn that the applicant was injured in the course of his employment.

7. Fast forward then to March 2015, when you were sitting in the South West Trial Court and sentenced an offender who pleaded guilty to maliciously destroying property by fire. The offender had blown up his uninsured shop for no apparent reason. CCTV footage was played showing the offender loitering near the shop, dousing it with petrol and setting it alight with matches. He was sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

8. The Daily Telegraph, in its undoubtedly accurate report of the case, quoted in somewhat glowing terms the following passage from your sentencing remarks:

*"This is the most egregious case I've seen of somebody being caught red handed."*

9. When you came to the District Court, you immediately volunteered to do criminal work. In indicating your first roster preferences, you wrote to Justice Blanch, in the following terms:

*"Although I did quite a deal of crime in early years at the bar, including a brief appointment as a temporary crown prosecutor for a month in Parramatta, I am very rusty! I would very much like to plunge into crime straight away rather than doing civil work..."*

10. Your offer was partially accepted as you have been an "all-rounder", sitting both in civil and crime. However, the rustiness in crime, which you brought to the Chief Judge's attention dissipated. In recent years, much of your time has been spent at the South West Trial Court, where you have been regarded as an essential member of Judge Sides' team dealing with an increasingly heavy criminal caseload.

11. During your judicial career, you have demonstrated some of the best qualities expected of a judge. Hard work, patience, thoroughness, and above all fairness.

12. Your industry has not been confined to judicial office. Last year, you completed your PhD in Theology at Charles Sturt University. The title of your thesis was: "*Atonement and Ethics in 1 John: A peacemaking Hermeneutic*". You argued that the theme of love in First John was "the interpretive key to understanding the nature and action of God on behalf of the world. First John should therefore be read as peace-affirming and peacemaking text."

13. It is hardly surprising to me that you would reject any interpretation of First John that might jar, as you put it, "*with an understanding of God as love*".

14. Judge Armitage, thank you for your dedicated judicial service over the last 22 years. However, I am delighted that your contribution will not entirely end as you have accepted a commission as an acting judge.

15. On behalf of all the judges of the court, I wish you and Maureen, a very happy future.